DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 280 193 EA 019 317

AUTHOR Johnston, Christine
TITLE TA Training in Supervisory Interpersonal Communication: Two Tests of the Effect.
PUB DATE Apr 87
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Washington, DC, April 20-24, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cognitive Structures; *Communication Research; Communication Skills; Educational Theories; Elementary Secondary Education; Instructional Leadership; *Interpersonal Communication; Research Utilization; Situational Tests; Speech Communication; Supervisory Methods; *Supervisory Training; Teacher Administrator Relationship; *Theory Practice Relationship; Training Methods; *Transactional Analysis

ABSTRACT

This study replicates an experimental design testing whether effects of supervisory training in transactional analysis (TA) language cues can be carried outside the laboratory setting of simulated testing into the field testing of professional work settings involving dialogues with supervisees. Transactional analysis theory presumes the communication act is metacognitive, and that individuals can select productive responses by identifying categories of word usage during interpersonal exchange. Subjects consisted of 62 graduate students enrolled in a course in supervision and school leadership. Both the experimental and control groups engaged in the standard course of instruction; however, only the experimental group received 12 training units in TA communication. Participants' responses to supervisory simulations were coded as productive or nonproductive transactions. In the field test, groups conducted conferences with teacher-supervisees that were analyzed as productive or nonproductive exchanges. Findings showed that a difference between the simulated test and the field test appears in the amount of TA training. In the simulated test, training accounted for 63 percent of variance, whereas only 20 percent of variance in the field test was attributed to training. Though TA training increases quality communication in a conference setting, various issues remain unresolved. This study signifies that dual testing lends assurance to TA training in enhancing supervisors' productive interpersonal communications. Further study should identify, under field conditions, interaction of variables resulting in more productive communication transactions. Six tables of data are appended. (CJH)

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TA Training in Supervisory Interpersonal Communication: Two Tests of the Effect

Dr. Christine Johnston
Adjunct Instructor
Educational Administration
210 Robinson Hall
Glassboro State College
Glassboro, New Jersey

EA 019 317

Running head: Supervisory Interpersonal Communication

Paper Presented at the American Educational Research Association, 1987 Annual Meeting, April 20 - 24, Washington, D.C.

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Abstract

Of the various aspects of supervision, the issue of interpersonal communication remains relatively unexplored (Lysaught, 1984). While supervisory texts (Lovell and Wiles, 1983; Sergiovanni and Starrett, 1983; and Hoy and Forsyth, 1986) have identified the significance of communication within the supervisory interpersonal process, few have studied what within the communication process affects the productive outcome of the communication, i.e., the willingness of the supervisee and supervisor to continue to engage in rational, adult to adult communication. A recent study by Johnston, Galluzzo, and Kottkamp (1985), involving the training of supervisors in the use of transactional analysis, concluded that within a laboratory setting, those trained in TA will use more productive communication responses in simulated conferences than those not trained. The conclusion of this study raised several pertinent questions. Among them was: Would the effects of TA training found under field conditions be similar to or different than those found under simulated conditions? The following study addresses that question.

Supervision in the 1980's continues to be an ill-defined area of educational administration. Most commonly it is confused with evaluation. Frequently it is narrowly defined as "playing boss" or "being in charge." To date the literature fails to reflect the real substance of supervision, i.e., the task of communicating the goals, expectations, and values of the educational organization to the individual professional employee and relating the values, abilities, and insights of the individual teaching professional to the organization in such a way that the outcome yields more effective classroom instruction, greater teaching competency, and a stronger sense of professional commitment both to teaching and to the particular educational organization. Clearly the relating of the "Organization to the Individual" and the "Individual to the Organization" is predicated upon the communication skills of the supervisor whether the supervisor be instructional or administrative. Here in lies the rub. For years the issue of communication has remained the unaccounted for variable in the process of supervision. Recently a study (Johnston, 1985) was completed based upon the earlier work of Lena Lucietto and Arthur Blumburg. The study, while relying upon simulated critical incidents, did indicate that graduate students enrolled in a semester long supervision course, could learn to use transactional analysis language cues to listen and respond to communication during a supervisory conference so as to keep the lines of thinking and communication open and to keep the attention on the solving of problems rather than on the parent-boss, supervisee-child relations which often overshadow the conferencing atmosphere (Lightfoot, 1983).

The study here reported is a replication of the original experimental design using tape simulations; however, this study also takes the

experimental design into a field environment testing whether those trained in the TA language cues can listen and respond to on-going dialogues with supervisees in professional work settings. The central question addressed in this study is, "Can the effects of training in TA language cues be carried outside the laboratory setting into the real world of supervision?"

In addition this follow-up study looks at the effect which training both the control and experimental group in clinical supervision has upon the communication skills of the respondents. The question addressed by the introduction of this training variable is, "Will another type of humanistic, problem solving approach to supervision dub as the variable which elicits productive, rational-adult responses or, on the other hand, does specific training in TA cues yield a higher level of productive communication during a supervisory conference than clinical supervisory training alone?

Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Transactional Analysis (TA), a theory of interpersonal communication. TA relies upon the analysis of transactions, units of verbal exchange, as a means of cueing the listener to the nature of communication which is occurring. Training in TA communication, which uses a framework of observable language behavior as a part of developing the trainee's cognitive awareness of communication, can occur rapidly (Johnston, 1985). Training in TA communication results in the individual's ability to identify the category of word usage during an interpersonal exchange and to thereby intentionally structure a potentially productive response. This theory of communication is a metacognitive conceptualization of the communication

act (Shuell, 1986) and suggests that each individual is capable of thinking, reflecting, and selecting an appropriate communication response rather than simply behaviorially reacting to external verbal stimulation.

Insert Figure 1 here

For the purpose of this study a productive response was one which did not become "hooked" by parent drivers (be perfect; be strong; please me; hurry up; and try hard) but which instead eminated from the adult, rational response which facilitates problem-solving, self-awareness and reflection on the part of the supervisee. A non-productive response was one which stems from the driver, non-rational communication response patterns and which produces or encourages excuse making, fault finding, defensiveness, arguments, hostility, rescuing, or manipulation. (Wagner, 1981)

The study here reported used two different means of testing the effects of training in transactional analysis upon the interpersonal communication of supervisors and supervisees. The operational framework for the first test involved the use of tape simulations in a classroom setting, while the second test took the previous simulation design out of the laboratory/classroom and placed it in a field setting. The rationale for doing so involved the standard trade-offs between experimental versus observational research (Berelson, 1952). Consequently the second part of this study required developing procedures for observation/content analysis which involved rating all communication data gathered during the two supervisory conferences conducted by the supervisor-student. Inclusion of all transactions for analysis avoided missing any crucial communication exchanges which might be of the greatest importance (Thomas, 1986).

The study reported here (1) tested the original experimental design; (2) field tested and quantified the effect which training a supervisor to use TA in interpersonal communication had on the use of productive transactions during a supervisory conference under field conditions; and (3) examined the effect which training in clinical supervision has upon both the experimental and control groups' communication between supervisor/supervisee during a conference.

Methods and Techniques

A non-equivalent control group design involving graduate students in a beginning supervision course was used to study the effect of instruction in transactional analysis on a supervisor's use of productive communication in both a classroom/laboratory setting and in a graduate student's school setting. The subjects consisted of 62 graduate students enrolled in the course, "Supervision and School Leadership." Both the experimental and control groups engaged in the standard course of instruction including training in clinical supervision. However, the experimental group received a treatment involving 12 units of training in transactional analysis communication skills including lectures, readings, role playing, and analysis of verbal scripts.

In Test I, tape recorded supervisory critical incidents were used to stimulate supervisory responses from participants in both the experimental and control groups. Five different supervisory dramas were developed. Ideas for the conference content came from three sources: the prior work of Pajak and Glickman (1984); interviews with instructional supervisors; and verbatims of actual post-observation supervisory conferences (Johnston, 1984).

The procedure used to elicit responses to the audio tapes involved the subjects hearing the supervisor's opening remarks which set the tone for the interaction. Once the supervisee on the audio tape responded, the tape recording stopped for two minutes, and each subject recorded in writing what she/he would say to the supervisee if she/he were the supervisor. This process continued for five exchanges. The simluations occurred at five regular intervals during the course of the semester. The data involved 1,260 responses.

The 1,260 written responses of the experimental and control groups were coded using the same protocols used for rating the responses in the original study. The coding of the responses used a dichotomous basis of productive and non-productive transactions. Cue words were cited and scripted phrases suggested by the trained raters as indications of productive and non-productive responses for each incident (Kahler, 1977; Carr-Smith, 1978). Random responses were selected and recoded as a means of testing the reliability of the coding procedure.

Productive transactions were coded for each respondent for each simulation. Data were analyzed using ANCOVA. ANCOVA's were run for Simulations II - V with Group as the independent variable, productive transactions as the dependent variable, and Simulation I as the covariate. Thus the initial difference between groups was controlled statistically.

Test II was initiated the second week of the semester and involved having the two groups conduct post observation conferences with a teacher-supervisee whom each had recruited from his/her work setting. The post observation conference was tape recorded, transcribed, and analyzed on the basis of the productive or non-productive exchanges which occurred during

the course of the conference. Using the same word cue criteria provided in the TA training, supervisor-supervisee verbal exchanges were labelled productive or non-productive. A simple majority of either productive or non-productive responses determined whether the conference was rated productive or non-productive. After 15 weeks, supervision students in both groups conducted a second post observation conference. Again the tapes and transcripts of the tapes were submitted for rating. Productive exchanges were coded for each respondent for each conference. Data were analyzed using ANCOVA. ANCOVA was run for Conference II with Group as the independent variable, productive conferences as the dependent variable, and Conference I as the covariate.

Results and Conclusions

The findings of this study suggest that TA training for instructional supervisors resulted in supervisors giving systematic, productive attention to interpersonal communication during both simulated and field supervisory conferences. The results of Test I (the simulated test) indicate that there was a significant difference ($p < .01$) between the productive response means of the experimental groups when controlled for differences on the pre-test via analysis of covariance. In the final ANCOVA, 63% of the variance in the use of productive responses in the two groups could be explained by training in TA. The results of Test II (the field test) indicate that there was a significant difference ($p < .01$) between the productive response means of the experimental and control groups, when controlled for differences on the pre-test via analysis of covariance. In the final ANCOVA, 20% of the variance in the use of productive responses between the two groups could be explained by training in TA.

Insert Tables 1 - 5 here

The T test run on the participants' prior knowledge of clinical supervision and subsequent use of clinical supervision in post-conference II suggests that while both groups did not have prior knowledge of clinical supervision techniques, both groups learned and used the clinical supervisory model in post conference II. However, for those not trained in TA, training in clinical supervision did not appear to increase the use of productive supervisory communication during the post conference.

Insert Table 6 here

An interesting difference between the simulated test and the field test appears in the amount of variance which can be attributed to TA training. In the simulated test 63% of the variance can be accounted for by the training; in the field test 20% of the variance can be attributed to TA training. In otherwords, while both tests achieved significance of p .01, the field test conditions obviously had other factors which contributed to the supervisor's ability to communicate using productive transactions. Thus while it appears that training in TA communication can increase the quality of communication between supervisor and supervisee in a conference setting, a number of issues remain unresolved.

A consideration of this study which may explain the difference in variance between Test I and Test II is the difference between laboratory and field testing. There are clear advantages to the use of simulated experiments. First, the simulation is more easily replicated; secondly, the response of each subject can be recorded; and thirdly, the

investigator has more control over both the subjects and the environment. However, the drawbacks to simulated studies are ever present. Primary among them is the fact that the subject knows the situation is simulated. The challenge to the applicability of simulated results is always, "Would it work in the real world?" The trade-offs remain and appear in this study. What was forfeited in the second test of this study was random assignment of supervisor-supervisee teams, control over the environment in which the recorded conferences occurred, and the placement of supervisor subjects in identical conditions. What is gained is a set of communication exchanges in which the supervisor has to respond to an on-going dialogue.

Educational Importance

The significance of this study is that the dual testing lends better assurance to the proposition that TA training is a viable approach to enhancing supervisor's productive interpersonal communication. Supervisors under both experimental and field conditions were able to analyze simulated transactions and on-going dialogue and respond with productive transactions. What has been learned from this study may well be applied to the instruction and inservicing of educational supervisors.

Beyond organizational structure and management techniques lies the significance of the manner in which the supervisor communicates with his/her supervisee. This study would suggest that supervisors can be trained to communicate in a rational, adult manner and that such communication encourages the continuation of a two-way communication thereby enabling a productive verbal exchange between the supervisor and supervisee.

Further Study

Further study on supervisory interpersonal communication might focus on identifying (under field conditions) the interaction of variables which results in more productive communication transactions. Clearly further empirical testing of supervisory communication is warranted (Lysaught, 1984).

Additional study in supervisory interpersonal communication might focus on the effect which supervisor's training in TA communication might have upon the supervisee's perception of supervisory communication during conferencing. Survey instruments completed by the "supervisees" of both groups at the conclusion of the 16 week study suggest that the supervisors who most consistently engaged in productive transactions were the same who were perceived by the supervisee as good listeners, non-parental, and authentic in their concern for the supervisee. In three instances, the supervisees of graduate supervisors in the experimental group asked their supervisors to remain in contact and provide the professional "give and take" which they had come to enjoy over the semester. On the other hand, in five instances, graduate student supervisors in the control group had difficulty completing the post observation conference because their supervisees did not wish to continue the supervisor/supervisee relationship. Transcripts of the conferences conducted with these supervisees document the parental "telling" approach of those supervisory students both in the pre and post test conferences. While this is by no means conclusive, these cases suggest that there is value to further studying the overall effect which TA training has upon the extended productive relationship between a supervisor and supervisee.

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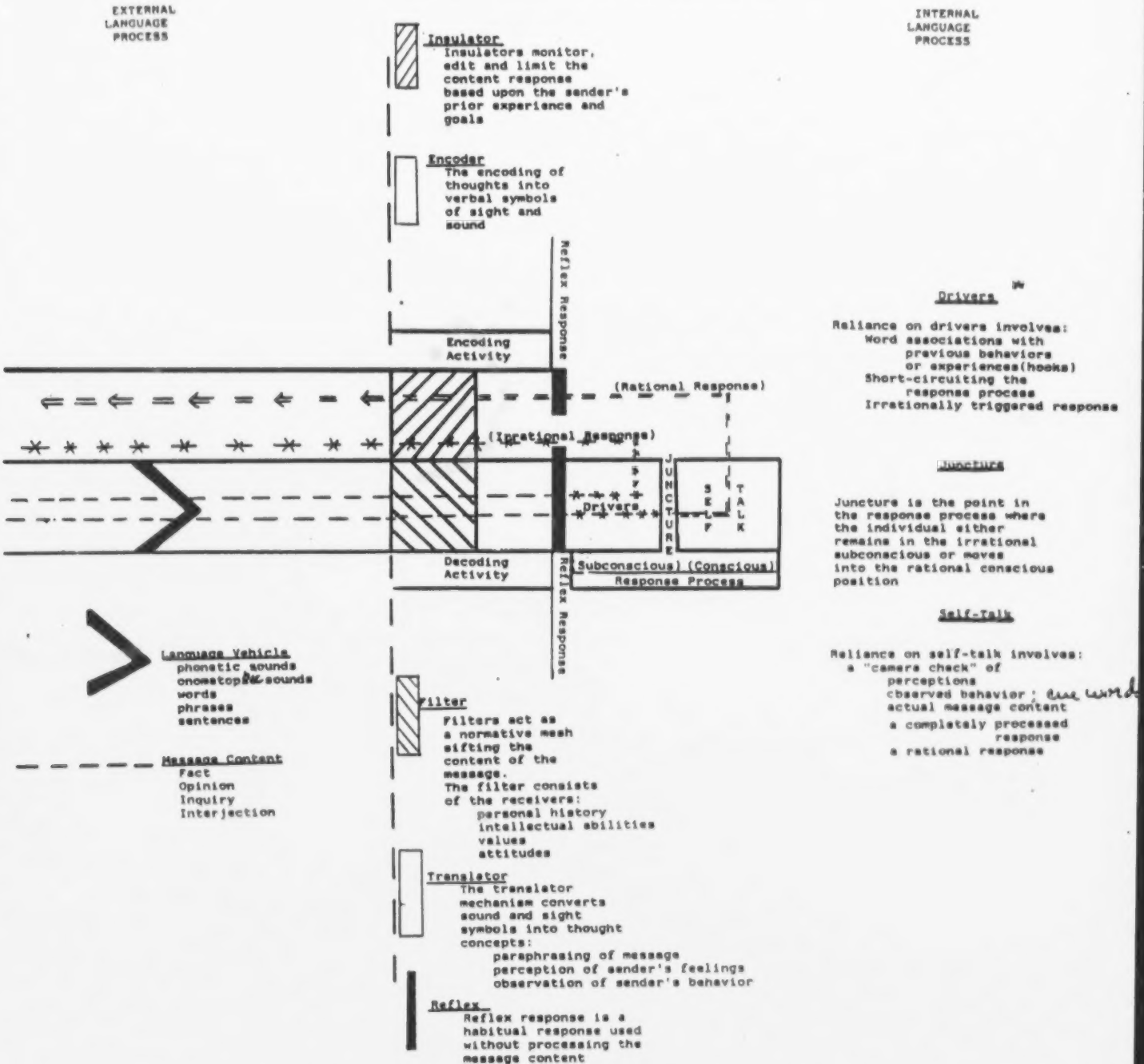
Figure 1

A Metacognitive Model of Internal and External Language Processes
Based Upon the Use of TA Cue Words



*For a more complete discussion and explanation of driver "cue" words see: Johnston, 1985, The Effects of Training in TA on Supervisory Interpersonal Communications, AERA, San Francisco.

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TABLE 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Supervisors' Productive Responses (Observed and Adjusted)

	Control				Experimental			
	Observed		Adjusted		Observed		Adjusted	
	X	(SD)	X	(SD)	X	(SD)	X	(SD)
Pretest								
Sim I	.97	(.92)			.73	(.87)		
Sim II	.74	(1.09)	.74	(.20)	2.04	(1.31)	2.03	(.23)
Sim III	1.23	(1.03)	1.20	(.17)	2.38	(.98)	2.41	(.19)
Sim IV	1.03	(.89	1.01	(.18)	2.42	(1.30)	2.55	(.21)
Sim V	.89	(.99)	.84	(.14)	3.04	(.82)	3.08	(.17)

TABLE 2

Analysis of Covariance Productive Response by Group, Control Sim. I, ANCOVA 1 for Sim. II, Productive; ANCOVA 2 for Sim. III, Productive

Source	df	s.s.	m.s.	R-squared	F	P
Group	1	24.6	1.44	.23	17.06	.0001*
Sim IP	60					

F(1,58)=4.01 .95
*Indicates significance at .05

ANCOVA for Sim III, Productive

Source	df	s.s.	m.s.	R-squared	F	P
Group	1	21.2	1.01	.26	20.89	.0001*
Sim IP	60					

F(1,58)=4.01 .95
*Indicates significance at .05

TABLE 3

Analysis of Covariance Productive Response by Group, Control Sim I, ANCOVA 3 for Sim IV Productive; ANCOVA 4 for Sim V, Productive

Source	df	s.s.	m.s.	R-squared	F	P
Group	1	29.94	1.77	.30	25	.0001*
Sim IP	60					

F(1,58)=4.04 .95
*Indicates significance at .05

ANVOCA for Sim IV, Productive

Source	df	s.s.	m.s.	R-squared	F	P
Group	1	73	.76	.63	95.97	.0001*

F(1,58)=4.04 .95
*Indicates significance at .05

TABLE 4

Means and Standard Deviations of Supervisors' Conference Productive Responses (Observed and Adjusted)

	Control				Experimental			
	Observed		Adjusted		Observed		Adjusted	
	X	(SD)	X	(SD)	X	(SD)	X	(SD)
Conf. I	.37	(.49)			.42	(.50)		
Conf. II	.40	(.50)	.40	(.07)	.85	(.37)	.84	(.08)

TABLE 5

Analysis of Covariance Productive Response by Group, Control Conference I, ANCOVA 1 Conference II, Productive

Source	df	s.s.	m.s.	R-squared	F	P
Group	1	2.93	14.48	.20	14.4	.0003*

F(1,58)=4.04 .95

TABLE 6

Means and Standard Deviations of Supervisors' Use of Clinical Supervision (Observed)

	Control		Experimental	
	Observed		Observed	
	X	(SD)	X	(SD)
Conf. I	.37	(.49)	.47	(.50)
Conf. II	.89	(.32)	.96	(.20)